THE BATTLE

OF

THE TWO PHILOSOPHIES.

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BY AN INQUIRER.

'Whatever nation has given up Philosophy,—whatever nation has given up Metaphysics,—is in a state of intellectual insolvency. Though its granaries should be bursting; though its territories should be netted with railroads; though its mills and foundries should be the busiest in the world; the mark of the beast is upon it, and it is going the way of all brutality.'

RECENT BRITISH PHILOSOPHY.

LONDON:
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1866.

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The little interest usually manifested in this country in questions of abstract philosophy, was agreeably exchanged last spring for the hearty applause which welcomed Mr. Mill's "Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy." Whilst its pages were yet hot from the press, it was pronounced by the writing public to be a complete success; and the joy with which the overthrow of Sir W. Hamilton's authority and the destruction of his philosophical system was proclaimed, was almost equal to that which welcomes the victory of the popular champion in the more ignoble strife of the Ring. Any interest shown in such discussions must be regarded as a healthy sign, even though it arises from our interest in the victor rather than in the victory. It is something to have learnt that metaphysical speculations are not wholly ridiculous and trivial. It is a healthy sign when a nation learns to be proud of its intellectual superiors;

and it may lead us to better things still; it may lead us to study their thoughts. Taking, however, all the circumstances of the battle into consideration, there is nothing to be surprised at, there may be something to be learnt, from this general outburst of enthusiasm. Besides the natural delight which British souls must ever experience in watching well-delivered and down-right blows, given in any fair fight whatever; besides that from the practical nature and utility of Mr. Mill's philosophcial writings, and from their great merit, he has long been the best known of our greater thinkers; and that just before this last work of his appeared, the events of the Westminster election had shown us that he is looked upon by foreigners as in some sort our national intellectual champion; besides all this, the philosophy he seeks to destroy is the very one it most behoves us to get rid of, would we bring our physical science and our mental philosophy into full harmony, by finally subjecting the elder to the younger and more vigorous brother, as modern thought demands.

On the other hand, Sir W. Hamilton has been comparatively little known. A name rather than a teacher to most of us, the grounds of his acknowledged authority have not been generally understood; but his system of philosophy has been felt to be wholly obstructive to that advance which the sciences of matter have been of late years so earnestly striving to make into the territory hitherto

reserved to the science of mind; an advance which, if they are to be, as many think, the lords of all, they must make; and which, if they do not speedily effect, their present career must be most materially changed.

But it is not only because Mr. Mill's teaching is practical and Sir W. Hamilton's is abstract; not only because the one is helpful and the other obstructive to the course of modern thought; there is that difference in the mode in which they have taught us, which, there is too much reason to fear, will in the present day inevitably decide the popularity or the unpopularity of any writer. Sir William Hamilton always declared he neither would nor could teach any who would not think for themselves. And most thoroughly has he kept his word. Whoever becomes his scholar is put into an intellectual gymnasium, and forced to face every problem, define every term, and analyse every fact for himself. Still, in his works, fragmentary as most of them are, the now silent master seems to say to us all, as he was wont to say in his lecture-room, 'Think, and I will help you to learn; refuse to think, and I have taken very good care you shall learn nothing here.' How could such a teacher be popular in an age so eager to learn, so abhorrent of the labour of thought as the present? Now, Mr. Mill's writings not only instruct us, they think for us. His readers float down towards his goal on the stream of his lucid style, admiring the skill of his reasoning, instructed by the information

he gives, rejoicing in the new and fertile fields of thought which every fresh turn brings into their view, and interested in watching the process of mind laid open to them; but never once compelled to take to the oars or to think for themselves. How can a teacher so agreeable, as well as talented, but be popular?

But, however natural the triumph, we need not say it was slightly premature. Even for the sake of the victor and his victory, it is impossible to allow the same man to be at once the accuser, the judge, and the jury, in a cause he has so energetically made his own; and, therefore, we must not take Mr. Mill's statement, that Sir W. Hamilton has been weighed in the balance and is found wanting, altogether for granted, even whilst we acknowledge that his authority on such a point is now probably the highest we can have. The questions at stake are far too important, too complicated, and have been too long contested, to be now decided by the fall of a single champion. And already more thoughtful reviewers have appeared on the field, showing how much has still to be said before it is quite certain that Sir W. Hamilton has fallen.

There are two questions which Mr. Mill has directly raised in his attack on Sir W. Hamilton's philosophy, both of great, though by no means equal importance: one is, what is the real worth of Sir W. Hamilton as

a thinker, and an educator of thought?—the other is, what is the truth of the transcendental system of philosophy, of which he is at present our chief exponent?

His argument runs thus: though Sir W. Hamilton's fundamental doctrines were not especially his own, but were held by him in common with many philosphers who had preceded him; yet, "his form of the opinion, and his arguments for it, are those which specially require to be considered, both because he came the latest, and wrote with a full knowledge of the flaws which had been detected in his predecessors; and because he was one of the ablest, the most clear-sighted, and the most candid."* He must therefore be acknowledged to be the champion of the *à priori* school, and to refute his teaching is to refute that system in its most complete and perfect form. Not however resting wholly on this, Mr. Mill has a second argument. He will take away the foundation of the *à priori* system of pyschology, by proving that it is unnecessary for the explanation of the facts on which it professes to be based: he will show us that experience, without this *à priori* element, is sufficient to explain them, and therefore that that element is inadmissible. In general it cannot be fairly demanded of those who would destroy a false system of philosophy, that they should prove themselves able to give us another in its place; but

* Introductory remarks, chap. i.

in the present case, Mr. Mill undertakes to refute the one philosophy by building up the other: if his theory will stand, his argument is unanswerable; but if it will not, the *à priori* philosophy remains unrefuted and untouched. There is a special interest attaching to this part of his argument, inasmuch as it is here that Mr. Mill for the first time enters on the field, where he had been so long expected, of pure metaphysics. Hitherto he has been employed, to our great benefit, in the easier departments of what we may call applied philosophy; but here he fairly engages in the more arduous work of a metaphysician, not only clearing away for us the false opinions and pulling down the idols of his predecessors, but offering us another theory in their stead, as the true solution of our metaphysical difficulties, and the solid foundation on which we may confidently raise our superstructure of mental science.

This being Mr. Mill's line of battle, we have first of all to consider how far it is true, that Sir W. Hamilton's overthrow involves the overthrow of transcendental philosophy. Indeed there is much reason to question whether his overthrow has been effected. One great ground of censure is, that Sir W. Hamilton has done so little, and left that little so incomplete; but Mr. Mill wholly ignores that which formed the greater part of his work—the living teaching he gave to living men—whereby he has raised up for our age and nation that which we most needed, a school of men who can and do think; a work which Plato

considered the only work worthy to be called philosophical. It is perfectly true that what Mr. Mill has done with ease in two short chapters—tracing out the growth of the mind from the first stage of sentiency as yet unconscious of personality, to its present busy life and marvellous complexity of emotion, knowledge, ideas, and forms of thought—Sir W. Hamilton's whole life and great industry wholly failed to accomplish. But then it is clear that he entertained a wholly different idea of what a true philosophy must be; and it cannot be that his demanding an accuracy, and a completeness of investigation such as no man, or generation of men could ever live to complete, makes his labours useless. If we are to have any complete science of mind, any true philosophy, it must be constructed painfully and patiently, and it cannot be completed yet: if there were as yet any metaphysical system, which professed to explain every fundamental difficulty, and to harmonise the main facts of psychology, we might safely assume that system must inevitably be false; for all those facts are not as yet known. So also when Mr. Mill charges Sir W. Hamilton with, indeed proves against him continual inconsistencies and discrepancies, it would not be difficult to show, both from history and reason, that all sound philosophy, whilst thus incomplete, must be liable to the objection of inconsistency. The Greek philosophers before Socrates were mostly quite consistent, each with his own scheme; and their systems have long perished. Plato was abundantly inconsistent with

himself, and lives. We cannot harmonise our conclusions together, until we have them all complete; and we cannot tell what conclusion each separate set of facts will lead us to, until those facts have been ascertained, analysed, and classed. Till this has been done, what we want is not the united testimony of all, but the independent testimony of each.

To return however to the question before us. Had Mr. Mill shown, that on all those points on which he has proved, as he thinks, Sir W. Hamilton is wrong, his statements and his arguments are better, or at least as good, as those of his predecessors in the same school: then, in answering him, he would have answered all. But he has taken special pains to point out, that in every point on which he differed from other transcendentalists, as from Cousin, and Reid, and Mr. Stewart, they were in the right; or that he mistook their meaning, or that at any rate he was as much in error as they were. Or had he shown, that the errors and confusions with which he charges him, so necessarily arose from his having adopted the *à priori* philosophy, that even his great abilities did not enable him to avoid them, then indeed a very strong *primâ facie* case had been made out against it. But so far from doing this, he has gone out of his way to trace them up to some personal deficiency, some mental incapacity, in Sir W. Hamilton himself. He begins indeed by stating,* "My subject

* Page 2.

is *not* Sir W. Hamilton, but the questions which he discussed;" but through his whole book he considers, not the questions themselves, but the manner in which Sir W. Hamilton blundered over them. And if this fact were not patent in every chapter, he forces it upon us in his conclusion,* where he sums up as the results of his examination, not the questions he told us would be his subject; not the false opinions on them he has slain; not his own true answers to them; but the defects and shortcomings of Sir W. Hamilton—his incapacity, and his general worthlessness as a philosopher. The result of this mode of attack is not only that the reader is unfairly put off his guard, not being aware that he is invited to assist in an unequal combat, in which the skill of a living master of logic is to contend against the reputation of a dead, and so far, a defenceless thinker. The result is, that whilst Mr. Mill seems to prove the transcendental answer to these questions is false, all he does prove is that Sir W. Hamilton was incapable of defending it, because he did not understand it. We are not objecting to Mr. Mill's personal attack on Sir W. Hamilton. Considering, as he does, that his influence is most pernicious, and that he is "the most formidable adversary of true philosophy," it is quite open to him to endeavour to destroy that influence, by either proving his opinion false, or by showing that Sir W. Hamilton did not understand his own

* Page 547.

fundamental doctrine, but believed himself to be holding one doctrine, whilst he was in truth holding the exact opposite.* That even when he was in the right, as in his controversy with Cousin,† he wholly failed to prove it, and was only right through a blunder.‡ That the sole result of his arguments is to show the futility of his own speculations.§ That the special doctrine which was the ground of his opposition to former transcendentalists,|| has "a magnificent sound, but is empty of the smallest substance.¶ That his way of mastering a difficulty was to leave it unsolved, and go on arguing as if he had resolved it.** That what truths he did perceive, were quite unconnected, separately seized by him when wanted to resolve some special difficulty, and then again lost sight of.†† That he wholly failed to think out his subjects, never mastering them so as to attain consistency, and consequently continually maintaining contradictory opinions.‡‡ And that his great learning consisted merely in laying up so vast a stock of other men's opinions, as nearly precluded him from thinking for himself;§§ whilst from his inability to enter into the very mind of another thinker, he could not understand any system of thought as a whole, or see the connection of these opinions with each other,|||| with many other such like things.¶¶ We say that all

* Page 31, chap. xvii. † Page 33. ‡ Page 56, and others.
§ Page 55. || Page 5. ¶ Page 87. ** Pages 122, 123.
†† Page 547. ‡‡ Page 551. §§ Page 549.
|||| Page 551. ¶¶ Pages 182-189, 284, 288, 294, 356, &c.

this is perfectly fair: we do not say it is a generous thing thus not to be content with refuting a man's opinions, but after each refutation, so carefully to measure the mental imbecility he showed in holding it—that is a question of taste. For our own part, we are inclined to think that, if your opponent is still living, and can call you if he wishes, more or less courteously, a blockhead in return; then these little compliments, coming from both sides, cannot bias a judicious reader's mind, and do serve to cheer his spirits; but if your adversary is dead, it is better taste and more prudent to avoid them. In any case they are wholly unnecessary to the interests of truth. But Mr. Mill has overstated his case, and in his eagerness to destroy Sir W. Hamilton's authority, has wholly upset his own purpose. It seems indeed as though he were so peculiarly irritated by him, that it is more than he can do to keep his hands off him: in general, he only praises him in order to heighten his fall, but even when really intending to praise him, he cannot refrain from taking away with one hand what he gives with the other.* In refinement of ungracefulness, the sentence in which he sums up *the merits* he has left to his fallen foe, exceeds anything of the kind we ever read: yet even these he is loath to leave him.† Such an example from a man of such just authority as Mr. Mill, is much to be deplored.

* Compare page 552 with 554. † Page 547, and note.

Now, if this subsequent estimate of Sir W. Hamilton be true (which by the way is wholly inconsistent with that first), he was incapable of being the champion of any metaphysical system whatever; and what his opinions were, or how he held them, are matters wholly impertinent to the question of their truth or falsehood. That a man who did not understand his own opinions, has used foolish arguments in support of them, does not prove those opinions wrong: that a man who was incapable of comprehending the opinions of others, has failed to refute them, can never show they are not refutable. If then Mr. Mill's attack has been successful, he proves much as against Sir W. Hamilton and his work; but little or nothing as against the transcendental philosophy. The next question is, has it been successful?

Without giving us any systematic account of Sir W. Hamilton's philosophy, Mr. Mill has preferred attacking it in detail; and this he has done on so great a number of isolated points, that to examine his arguments on each, would require a volume at least as large as his own. There are however three subjects which he has himself pointed out to us, as those which constitute the turning points of the battle: *i.e.* 1. The Philosophy of the Conditioned, involving the relativity of human knowledge, which, he tells us, Sir W. Hamilton takes as the basis of his philosophy.* 2. The doctrine of free will, which

* Page 57.

"was so fundamental with him, that it may be regarded as the central idea of his system, and the determining cause of most of his opinions;"* and 3. The doctrine that mind and matter, an ego and non-ego, are original data of consciousness; which formed the basis, as he says, of Sir W. Hamilton's system of psychology.† These questions being of principal importance, and affording ample grounds for testing and comparing the ability of the two metaphysicians, we proceed to examine their respective methods of dealing with the chief points involved in them; and in doing this we shall confine ourselves to Mr. Mill's own statements, and avail ourselves, as much as possible, of his reasoning.

Mr. Mill states "the peculiar doctrine of Sir W. Hamilton, called the 'Philosophy of the Conditioned,'" in various quotations from his works, of which the following may serve as a brief summary.‡

All that we can positively think lies between two extremes, mutually contradictory of each other, and neither of which we can conceive as possible; of which, both cannot be true, but one we must admit as necessary. We cannot then infer a fact to be impossible, on the ground of our inability to conceive its possibility.

He took as his example, Extension: which he

* Page 488. † Page 204. ‡ Chap. vi.

affirmed, exhibits two pairs of contradictory inconceivables; all four equally unthinkable, but two of which we are compelled to recognise as necessary and true. For space, taken as a whole, must either be limited or unlimited; neither of which can we represent to ourselves in thought, but one of which we must admit to be true. Again, if space be considered as a part, as divisible; we can neither conceive an absolute indivisible minimum of space, nor yet think of it as infinitely divisible.

Mr. Mill confines his refutation mainly to the first of these pairs.

He admits Sir W. Hamilton's proposition, that a negative conception is the same as no conception; but when Sir W. Hamilton goes on to affirm, that the only conception we are able to form of what is infinite, is negative—*i.e.* that it is not finite—that the infinite is conceived only by thinking away every character of the finite, and, consequently, infinite space or time is inconceivable, both these propositions Mr. Mill denies. Admitting we cannot conceive space to be finite, because having never perceived any portion of space which had not other space beyond it, this association, confirmed by invariable experience, has become indissoluble;* yet he affirms we can conceive infinite space. Is not experience then as much against this conception as against the other? We cannot think space finite, because we have never yet

* Pages 78-79.

found its limits. But of infinite space we neither have, nor can we possibly ever have, any experience whatever; however far we travel, even in imagination, the space we have traversed is finite; infinite space is still beyond us. Whence then can we have obtained that experience which alone, according to Mr. Mill, can enable us to form any conception?

"Instead," he says* again, "of thinking away every character of the finite, we think away only the idea of an end or boundary." What other character belongs to the finite, except this very one of being ended, of having bounds, he does not tell us. But when I assert of any given space, it is finite, what other character do I affirm of it than this, that it has an end? And when I affirm space is infinite, what more do I affirm than this, it has no end? Indeed Mr. Mill admits this is true of "the Infinite, that senseless abstraction," but denies it is true of infinite space. "In trying to form a conception of that, we do not think away its positive character; we leave it the character of space, of its three dimensions, and their geometrical properties. We leave it also a character which belongs to it as infinite,—that of being greater than any other space." Surely this last is a delusive expression. Infinite space so includes all space, that it leaves us no other space with which to compare it; else we could add that other space to it, and make it bigger still. Do we then

* Page 81.

assert that infinite space is not greater than its part? No, we deny we can think of it as a whole; if we could, we must say it is a whole infinitely greater than all its finite parts put together, which is inconceivable. Mr. Mill proceeds: "If an object which has these well-marked positive attributes is unthinkable, because it has a negative conception as well, the number of thinkable objects is remarkably small." Here he has dropt Sir W. Hamilton's doctrine, and begun to attack another, which we believe no man ever held, and he certainly did not. Who ever supposed that adding the negative attribute infinite to the positive conception space, suddenly and quite magically renders us unable any longer to think of space? So far from turning space into a negative conception, when we predicate of it this attribute infinite, we deny the possibility of its negation. The question is not whether space itself, but whether this one of its attributes, is conceivable; and whether it is a negative attribute or not. By itself Mr. Mill admits it is; it could not very well be denied. Does he mean then, that whenever we add a negative attribute to a positive conception, our conception of that attribute becomes at once positive? If so, it must be impossible for us ever to know the negative attributes of anything, and it would follow we can have no definite conceptions whatever. Mr. Mill says that "dumb" is a negative conception, and asks if this be an example of the inconceivable? Unquestionably it is no conception at all. If an

astronomer were to tell me a new existence had been discovered in another world, but that the only character as yet ascertained of it, and, indeed, the only fact from which he inferred its existence, was its "dumbness," would that be a thinkable object? I can readily represent to myself a dumb man, because I know what it is to be able to speak: to make the cases parallel, I ought to be able to think of space as finite, which I cannot do: "affirmation and negation are relatives, and relatives are only known in and through each other; we cannot therefore have a consciousness of the affirmation of any quality, without having at the same time the correlative consciousness of its negation."* But Mr. Mill appears to maintain we can have the correlative consciousness of the negation, where he admits it is impossible for us to have the relative consciousness of the affirmation of the quality.

The confusion seems to aim from his considering that "infinite," when predicated of space, is changed into "indefinite." For a page further on he speaks of "a merely negative notion," as being "a vague and indeterminate notion." He has, however, admitted that it is no notion at all, and how then can it be a vague and indefinite notion? No words can be more determinate, less vague, than no and not; and our conception of any object is then only definite, when we know both its position and its negative

* Page 77 quoted from Sir W. H.

attributes. If we know only what it is not, we have no conception; if we know only what it is, our notion of it is undefined. He proceeds to say that, "though our notion of infinite space can never be adequate, since we can never exhaust its parts, the conception, as far as it goes, is a real conception. We *completely* realise in imagination the various attributes composing it. We realise it as space; as greater than any given space, and even as endless, in an intelligible manner: we clearly represent to ourselves, that however much of space has already been explored, and however much more of it we may imagine ourselves to traverse, we are no nearer the end than we were at the beginning. This conception is both real and perfectly definite." Mark again the inaccuracy of this language. If I "completely realise" in imagination a given attribute, how can my conception of it be, as Mr. Mill says it is, "inadequate?" The definition of "inadequate ideas" used to be, "partial and *incomplete* representations of their archetypes."* Moreover this conception is not the conception of endless space, but merely of a space to the end of which we have not yet come. If we could realise in thought infinite space, that conception would be a perfectly definite one; but the notion that is here offered us in its place, though it may be real, is certainly not definite; it is merely the conception of an indefinite extension. However long you go on

* See Dr. Watt's *Logic*, chap. 3, sec. 4, div. 3. Dr. Johnson gives "incompletely" as an equivalent for "inadequately."

adding space to space and greatness to greatness in the formation of your infinite space, you will, Mr. Mill says in effect, have only measured over so much finite space; and this you can represent yourself doing. Let us then make the attempt. I imagine myself travelling twenty leagues through space; there I stop and consider. This is a finite space; infinite space is infinitely greater than this. I will go on after it—I go on in imagination. I have travelled over twenty nonillions of leagues. Still I find this is a finite space; infinite space is infinitely greater than this: I am no nearer it than I was at the end of twenty leagues. Wherever I go, being myself finite, I carry of necessity measure and the finite with me. Certainly we find no difficulty in imagining ourselves thus continually seeking after a notion of infinite space, and finding ourselves—when increasing greatness has become so indefinite that imagination refuses any longer to grasp it—just as far from having conceived it as when we first began. We can easily in imagination

> Forerun our peers, our time, and let
> Our feet millenniums hence be set;

and then find

> We have not gained a real height,
> Nor are we nearer to the light;
> Because the scale is infinite.

The difficulty is to imagine how this old and familiar way of proving to ourselves that infinite space and infinite time are inconceivable, can be thus

mistaken for completely realising those conceptions. In truth, when we strive to think of infinite space, the nearest approach we can make to it is this notion of an indefinite space, which Mr. Mill has substituted for it. But these two conceptions are not only verbally, they are really wholly distinct. An indefinite space is a space of the extent of which we think vaguely, without knowing or without thinking where its boundaries are. Infinite space has certainly, and quite distinctly, no boundaries anywhere.

And now as to the meaninglessness of "that senseless abstraction, the infinite."* In one sense certainly it has for us no meaning, being incomprehensible. But if Mr. Mill intends to say, that it is a useless and senseless thing clearly to abstract from our notions of space, time, and God, that one attribute of infinite, and to examine it by itself, in order to ascertain what it is which is common to our conception of each, then he must entertain a very peculiar notion of the inutility of analysis, and one which we have not been able to find, at least formally, in his own works. To say that in another state of existence we might not have attributed infinity to those three conceptions, is surely to say nothing at all to the purpose. The fact remains, we do attribute it to them: as far as history goes back men always have been trying to conceive them: we cannot now divest ourselves of them. And the business of the metaphysician is, to account for

* Pages 45, 48, 81, *sic.*

them. In order to discover how we came by them, he must first ascertain, with a good deal more exactness than Mr. Mill deems useful, what they are. He finds that our conceptions of space, of time, of God, agree in possessing the attribute of infinity; they seem to have no other common character than this. He finds we have no other conceptions that do possess it; then he must separate this common attribute, and examine it by itself. What do we mean by infinite? —having no end. How do we get the notion?—by thinking away the character of finite. Then it is a negative conception, which accounts for its being incomprehensible. By this path also we arrive at the same conclusion, as before by the road of experience, *i.e.* that infinite space and time are inconceivable; and although men do, and will believe an Infinite Being is, they can form no conception of His infinity. To add the definite article to an adjective, is in general a peculiarly disagreeable and confusing mode of expression. Sir W. Hamilton appears to have adopted it in arguing against Cousin, because Cousin used it, and he would meet him on his own ground. But however objectionable in respect of style, it merely serves to help us to think of the attribute by itself, and to resist our natural tendency to add to it unconsciously some positive and special conception: it makes no change in the attribute. Further on we find Mr. Mill taking refuge in the exactly parallel abstraction, "The Unknowable."*

* Page 499.

The objection,* that "an abstract Infinite, a being not merely infinite in one or in several attributes, but which is the Infinite itself, must be not only infinite in greatness, but also in littleness; its duration not only infinitely long, but infinitely short, &c.," will hardly hold when we apply to it the rule that negative conceptions are no conceptions.† For absolute littleness is merely the negation of greatness; absolute shortness, the negation of length; weakness, of strength; folly, of wisdom. Reduce duration or extension to their smallest conceivable units, still you have a positive duration, a real extension. Take away that unit, and do you get to a positive littleness? You get nothing. To talk of infinite littleness—infinite non-extension or non-duration—is to talk of infinite nothing. Which is indeed to talk, we must not say infinite, but absolute nonsense. Nothing can neither be finite nor infinite; it has no attributes, being nothing. It may be more difficult to realise the fact, that evil and folly are merely negations, because we know them only as united to positive conceptions, where their practical effects are as real and evident as the effects of wisdom and goodness. Yet that we neither have, nor can form any conception of folly, except as the negation of wisdom; nor of evil, but as the absence of all good, is undeniable. It must needs be, that the effects of the absence of any quality shall be co-extensive with the

* Page 44.

† Mr. Mill himself uses this argument against Sir W. Hamilton see note, p. 256.

effects of its presence. A perfectly dark night is just as real and as potent in its effect on us and our affairs as is a bright day; yet who doubts that darkness is nothing but the absence of light? So it is of evil. Imagine a being who, with all the passions, desires, and intelligence of a man, had absolutely no love, truth, or justice; no capacity for them in deed, in thought, or in feeling; a being to whom these are so impossible, that he cannot even exercise or feel them towards himself. Such a being would be absolutely evil, because in him there would be an absolute negation, an absence of all good. It is impossible for him to be more unloving, for he has and can have no love; or more false, for he has no truth; or more unjust, for he is incapable of ever being, even in the remotest degree, just. It may be objected, that hatred is a positive passion, and admits of degrees. But the passion which in its various degrees we call anger, wrath, hatred, and malice, is not in itself evil, but the necessary correlative of love. It is an essential attribute of Him whose name is Love, that He hates evil. It becomes evil only when from its excess it is out of proportion with, and so negatives truth; or when from its wrong direction, it is contrary to justice. As the attribute of infinity excludes the negation of its subject, so the fact that an absolute Being *includes* in itself all that is actual, can only prove that it *excludes* from itself all that is negative; and evil therefore is excluded.

So also of an Infinite Being.* Mr. Mill argues that all the attributes of God cannot be infinite; but that some, as power, may be infinite; and some, as goodness and knowledge, must be absolute; because neither can knowledge be more than complete, nor goodness more than perfect. When we know all there is to be known, he says, knowledge has attained its utmost limit. But this is merely begging the whole question. If there be an Infinite Being, He cannot know all there is to be known unless He know Himself; and adequately to know what is infinite is to have infinite knowledge. The same thing would be true if there could be a Being whose power and duration only were infinite. "The will," he adds, "is either entirely right or wrong, in different degrees: downwards there are as many gradations as we choose to distinguish; but upwards there is an ideal limit. Goodness can be imagined complete,—such that there can be no greater goodness beyond it." Mr. Mill might well warn us that metaphysical questions lie at the root of all it most concerns us to know, when he was going to bring before us so fearful a conception as this. It would be difficult to realise the dreariness of the universe, if indeed goodness at the best be finite, whilst evil is infinite. If gifted with a life that is to last for ever, and a nature that finds happiness only in progress upwards, our progress in goodness and knowledge must cease, but

* Page 35.

our progress in evil may be eternal; happiness at the best comes to an end, but misery may increase for ever. What hope or help were then left to us, if even in heaven we must find a finite God and an infinite Satan? But it seems to us there is a double error in this assertion. There cannot be unlimited degrees of wrong, for when goodness ceases, we come to that entire absence of good which is absolute evil; and beyond that nothing we cannot go. On the other hand, goodness in a finite being, which can never be infinite, would yet be perfect if it were co-extensive with his knowledge and his power. But a Being of infinite power and finite goodness, would not be perfectly good, because His power would not be wholly, but only in part directed by His goodness. Nay, as that which is finite bears no proportion whatever to what is infinite: as however great it be absolutely, it is still infinitely less than infinity, such a Being would be partly good and yet infinitely evil, which is absurd in reason and impossible in fact. It is *this* conception that is a fasciculus of contradiction. Admit infinite power, and we must also admit an Infinite Being, for if the will be finite, the infinite power is not wholly His, to whom it is attributed. And an Infinite being is not perfectly good unless He is infinitely good.

But if Mr. Mill's argument fails on these three points; if it is not a wholly senseless thing, that we cannot help striving to think of the Infinite and the Absolute; if He who possesses one infinite attribute,

must Himself be infinite, and infinite in all His attributes; if we are alike unable to think of space and time as finite, or as infinite; if he has not enabled us to comprehend infinity; then, so far from having swept away the philosophy of the conditioned, he has not even touched it.

In support of the doctrine alluded to above, that what now appears inconceivable to us, may be so only because nature does not afford us any experience of those combinations which are necessary to make it conceivable, Mr. Mill quotes and adopts the following most unfortunate illustration.* A man who has no experience whatever of straight lines, having lived in a world where every object is round, is supposed to be suddenly placed where he can see a railway stretching out on a perfectly straight line to an indefinite distance in each direction. "He would see the first straight lines he had ever seen, meeting or tending to meet at each horizon; and he would infer, in the absence of other experience, that these two straight lines actually did enclose a space." Very likely he would infer the lines he saw included a space; because he would not, and in such a position could not, see straight lines, but bent ones, seeing the rails, as he must, in perspective. It is not necessary to go out of this world to ascertain this, nor to hear men call crooked things straight. Let the gentlemen photograph a straight railroad, and placing the right and left-hand plates together, unite the lines of the

* Pages 66–69 and note, page 70, page 269.

rails in their true position again. If those lines are straight ones, they will see two straight lines enclosing, or tending to enclose a space. The other illustration, of the same hypothesis, is just of the same kind. A world is supposed where little boys can never by any chance add two and two together, but what a jack in the box, in the shape of a unit, jumps into the answer and turns it into five. Assuming that none of them had wit enough to detect the trick, their sums would doubtless be always wrong: but not because they would conceive that two and two make five, but because the invariable association would be so strong, they could never think of two and two, but always of two, one, two. Like too many in this world, they would speak of one thing, meaning another.

The next point of Mr. Mill's attack* is Sir. W. Hamilton's doctrine, that the basis of all our knowledge is in belief. As his own doctrine is identically the same in substance with this, it is very difficult to make out the grounds of this attack, and the more so as he seems to think Sir W. Hamilton's teaching on this point so self-evidently absurd that to state it is to refute it; whereas to us it appears so obviously true as to be almost incapable of proof. He tells us that Sir W. Hamilton recognises, besides knowledge, a second source of intellectual conviction, called

* Page 57, chap. v.

belief; and we are inclined to answer, of course he must. He then quotes from him these words: "We know what rests on reason, but believe what rests on authority. But reason itself must rest at last on authority, for the original data of reason do not rest on reason, but are necessarily accepted by reason on the authority of what is beyond itself. These data are therefore, in rigid propriety, Beliefs or Trusts. Thus it is that in the last resort, we must perforce *philosophically* admit, that belief is the primary condition of reason, and not reason the ultimate ground of belief. The ultimate facts of consciousness are given less in the form of cognitions, than of beliefs. Consciousness in its last analysis, in other words our primary experience, is a faith. We do not in propriety *know* that what we are compelled to receive as not self, is not a perception of self; we can only, on reflection, *believe* such to be the case, in reliance on the original necessity of so believing, imposed on us by our nature." From these words Mr. Mill endeavours to force the following inference: "It thus appears that in his opinion belief is a *higher source* of evidence than knowledge: knowledge itself rests finally on belief, and natural beliefs are the sole warrant for all our knowledge. Knowledge therefore is an *inferior ground* of assurance to natural beliefs." Sir W. Hamilton says nothing of the kind. Take these three propositions: $a=b$: $b=c$: therefore $a=c$. Suppose the truth of the two first rests on intuition, in which case we cannot prove, but do believe them to be true. The

truth of the last proposition rests wholly on the truth of those two first: does it therefore rest on an inferior ground of assurance? Not in the least. Our certainty of its truth cannot exceed, but neither can it by any possibility be less, than our certainty of the two first. The inference sought to be drawn is palpably false.

The next charge is that Sir W. Hamilton, in drawing this distinction, is misusing words. "In common language knowledge is understood to mean complete conviction, belief—a conviction somewhat short of complete; or else we are said to believe when the evidence is probable, but to know when it is intuition, or demonstration from intuitive premises. But in Sir W. Hamilton's language, it is the intuitive convictions that are the beliefs," &c. In Sir W. Hamilton's language it is the intuitive convictions that rest on necessary beliefs. The first question to be settled is, whether the distinction Sir W. Hamilton is here pointing out is a real one. Mr. Mill unhesitatingly affirms it is.* "In many of his writings, *it seems as if* the distinction he draws between knowledge and belief were meant to correspond to the difference between what we can explain by reference to something else, and those ultimate facts which cannot be referred to anything higher. He often speaks of knowledge as resting ultimately on belief, and of ultimate principles as not known, but believed by a

* Note, page 125.

necessity of our nature. The distinction is real." And being real, it is evidently most important in the determination of the true basis of knowledge. The next question then is, in what language is this distinction to be expressed? In the ordinary affairs of life we do not need the distinction, and, therefore, common language does not recognise it; but, assuming the truth of our intuitions as indisputable, says we know them. But in metaphysics, it is usually needful to use words with more precision, and to carry our analysis for that purpose further back. Grant that I know a fact which I perceive intuitively: how do I know my intuition is true? it is impossible to prove it true, for I can give no proof of its truth, which does not take that truth for granted. Sir W. Hamilton says we believe it through a necessity of our nature; Mr. Mill, giving no answer, contents himself with insisting that Sir W. Hamilton is bound to use words in a philosophical analysis, with that inaccuracy which suffices for ordinary life, and by calling an ultimate belief not a belief, but knowledge—to obliterate a distinction he himself admits is a real one, and, therefore, one which cannot be obliterated. Now a little further on, we not only find Mr. Mill asserting that we have at least one ultimate belief, but also making that one belief the sole warrant and foundation of all our knowledge. For he traces up all our knowledge to our experience.* He shows

* Chapters xi. and xii.

that we can have no experience without memory;* and therefore, that all the certainty of our knowledge depends on the veracity of memory. How do we know our memory is true? We do not know it. Mr. Mill tells us,† "Our *belief* in the veracity of memory is evidently ultimate: no reason can be given for it, which does not presuppose the belief, and assume it to be well founded." All, therefore, which he alleges in Chap. v. against Sir W. Hamilton, may, with equal unfairness, but far more plausibility, be urged against himself. If Sir W. Hamilton is bound to call a necessary belief intuitive knowledge, Mr. Mill ought to say, "our knowledge of the veracity of memory is ultimate" and not "our belief in." And unless he himself distinguishes between this ultimate belief, and the belief of common language, derived from probability when certain knowledge cannot be had—the absurdity with which he charges his opponent—he really commits himself, and "a conviction somewhat short of complete, such as is implied in our belief" of the veracity of memory, is the only foundation we have for "that complete conviction which knowledge is understood to mean."

This attack is renewed in a different, but in an even more unintelligibly impatient form, a little further on.‡ Having shown an (apparent) inconsistency in Sir W. Hamilton's account of the distinction between belief and knowledge, Mr. Mill devotes a

* Page 193. † Note, page 174. ‡ Pages 121–123.

passage from "towards the end of his lectures on Logic," in which Sir W. Hamilton himself pointed out this inconsistency to his pupils; and then he adds, "the remark which this tardy reflection suggests to him, is merely this: 'the consideration however of the relation between belief and knowledge does not properly belong to logic, except so far as it is necessary to explain the nature of truth and error. It is altogether a metaphysical discussion; and one of the most difficult problems of which metaphysics attempts the solution.' Accordingly, he takes the extremely unphilosophical liberty of leaving it unsolved. But when a thinker is compelled by one part of his philosophy to contradict another, he cannot leave the conflicting assertions standing, and throw the responsibility of his scrape on the arduousness of his subject." But if, as in this case, the conflicting assertion to be removed is a fact, he must leave it standing. Or are we to suppose that a thinker, who finds out a fact for us in our own nature, acquires such a property in it that he can take it away from us again, just to save himself from the perplexity of a self-contradiction? Sir W. Hamilton was incapable of such robbery. "When he began to perceive that if his theory is correct, nothing can be believed except in as far as it is known, he did not renounce the attempt to distinguish between belief and knowledge." The charge then is, that in examining the phenomena of knowledge and belief, Sir W. Hamilton ascertained a real distinction existing between them; that in

working out the consequences of this distinction he met with a difficulty he had not at first noted; that he had occasion in the course of a lecture on logic to point out this difficulty, but could not then go into it, because his pupils were unprepared for its investigation, and a lecture on logic was not the proper place for an irrelevant metaphysical discussion on a very intricate point. That having taken the "extremely unphilosophical liberty" of declining to enter into it at an improper time; and subsequently of dying after years of ill health, without having solved every metaphysical difficulty he had perceived,* he left this also unsolved. And yet, though aware by his own confession he had not solved it, he did not at once renounce the attempt to distinguish between two mental states or acts, between which he had positively ascertained, as Mr. Mill admits, a real distinction does in fact exist. Incapable of denying a fact he knew to be true, merely because he could not at once reconcile it with another, he reserved the difficulty for future examination. So strange an attack can only be met by a *tu quoque*. In the statement of Mr. Mill's own psychological theory, we find he also comes on a difficulty. Now, Sir W. Hamilton's difficulty arose from two sets of facts he could not reconcile, but Mr. Mill's is forced on him by his own free choice: of two hypotheses, one of which he must choose, he chooses that which is self-contradic-

* Page 488.

tory. What course does he now deem the most philosophical for himself to adopt? Does he hasten to solve the contradiction? He does not attempt it. Does he postpone it for future enquiry? Not for a moment. Does he then abandon his theory? Not a bit of it. "Throwing the responsibility of his scrape on the arduousness of his subject," he tells us, that as he cannot renounce his self-contradiction, he thinks our wisest course will perhaps be to accept it as an inexplicable fact.*

We come now to Mr. Mill's attack on that which was, he tells us, the central idea of Sir W. Hamilton's philosophy, and the determining cause of most of his philosophical opinions—the doctrine of the freedom of the will. It is contained in the twenty-sixth chapter of his work, which certainly appears to us to be the ablest of all.

The question is as to the motive power, the efficient cause of men's actions. There are three hypotheses to be considered; for, either man originates, or causes his own actions, which is the first hypothesis; or those actions follow certain moral antecedents;—namely, desires, aversions, habits, and dispositions, combined with outward circumstances, with the same uniformity as physical effects follow physical causes; and all these again are effects of other moral causes, as education, or other moral and

* Page 213.

physical influences. The second hypothesis traces all these causes through a longer or shorter chain, back to the universal or first cause, the creative cause of man and all his circumstances. The third, denying any first cause, carries back the whole series into the Unknowable; and finally into infinite non-commencement.

Now those who maintain free will, assert that an absolute commencement postulated in the two first hypotheses, and an infinite non-commencement postulated in the third, are alike inconceivable, and beyond experience; that one of the two must be admitted, and therefore no argument drawn from reason is of any avail against either, because equally available against the rest. The only possible grounds we can have for preferring one, must be found in considerations of probability; as, which is the most in harmony with our consciousness; with the testimony of experience; with what we know of man's moral nature; and, as between the two first, which is the most consistent with what we are led to infer as to the moral character of the first cause, from our own nature, and the apparent tendencies of creation.

The exact question before us is, not whether every act is, and must be, determined by the strongest present moral motive; but whether the motive force which determines it, is, or in any case can be, man's own originating or creative power: or whether it is, always and in every case, some desire or habit of his own, which derives its determining power not from

his own will-force, but from his character and circumstances. The first is asserted to be the fact testified by our consciousness; and therefore inexplicable. The second is in its explanation of the immediate phenomena more intelligible, but in its final and necessary result, is equally rejected by the understanding.

Assuming then the existence of a Universal Cause, and arguing from moral results to moral causes, the supporters of the first hypothesis maintain, that the First Cause of man must be an intelligent, moral, and omnipotent Creator. The supposition that this Creator—willing the happiness and therefore the perfection of the intelligent and moral creature—has imparted to man such a portion of His own motive and creative force, as that they also may be, if they will, the originators and creators of their own actions, has in it nothing incredible. Its probability rests on its harmony with the irresistible conviction we have before we act, that we can do, or refuse to do the action, in face of the strongest temptation not to do, or to do it: and after we have acted, that we need not have done it, had we resisted our desire to do it strongly enough. Mr. Mill asserts, with a good deal of probability, that this conviction could only be acquired by experience; if so, then experience harmonises with free will on this point; as it does in the further fact, that our happiness and our progress are alike dependent on our exercise of self-control, and this self-government supposes free will. Further,

they maintain that both our own consciousness, and our experience tell us, we *are* morally responsible for our actions; and that we are not morally responsible for any action we did not freely will, and could not from circumstances help committing.

Against the second hypothesis, they allege it contradicts the testimony of our consciousness on both these points. If our actions are determined by our will, our will by our desires, our desires by our character and circumstances, then our actions are not under our own control; and our character being determined for us, we are not morally responsible either for it, or for the actions to which it impels us. That this makes man not the author of his own actions, but only the medium through which some other moral force, acting on and through his organism, evolves certain results of a moral character. Hence the original creative cause of man and his nature, character, and circumstances, becomes the real author of all he is, and the cause of all he does; and as a vast proportion of men's actions tend to produce, and do actually produce misery and wickedness; that first cause must be morally evil; a conclusion which contradicts all that reason leads us to infer respecting His moral character. Lastly they urge, that as this hypothesis only removes the inexplicable difficulty of conceiving a self-determined will, or an absolute commencement further back, and then has to admit it, it is liable to all the objections that can be

urged against the first, whilst it has far less probability. It is therefore inadmissible.

The third alternative, infinite, non-created, non-commencement, is equally inconceivable, and has nothing whatever of probability to recommend it. As Mr. Mill leaves it out of consideration, so may we.

I. Mr. Mill denies, in the first place, that we are reduced to the necessity of choosing one of these three inconceivable hypotheses. Denying the first, the necessitarian has two modes of escaping from Sir W. Hamilton's dilemma. If he believes in the existence of a First Cause, he can "afford to make a plain avowal of his ignorance, because we are only concerned with It, in relation to what It preceded, and not as Itself preceded by anything.*

We deny both the fact and the reason for it. If a man affirms a first cause at all, what he affirms is, that it is not preceded, or caused by anything else. The term Universal Cause has no meaning, if it has not this, that no cause preceded it. If a man refers all our actions back to a Universal Cause, and then says he can afford to confess his ignorance whether that Universal Cause be universal or not; we can only answer, that if he can afford to talk without any meaning at all, we cannot afford to listen to him. As to the assertion that we are only concerned with the Universal Cause, in relation to the effects It has preceded, and not at all with what It is, Its moral

* Page 499.

character and attributes, so wildly strange an assertion can only be met with a flat contradiction. Indeed, Mr. Mill may know best what he himself is, or is not concerned with. He has made up his mind that if the First Cause be an immoral God, he will defy him to do his worst, and will not worship him.* It may be a matter of no concern to him, whether he shall have to do this or not. But after his stern denunciation of the immorality of Mr. Mansel's creed, it ought not to be a matter of indifference to him whether he *can* resist to any purpose. If he himself is merely an organism, through which a universal Cause—by however long a chain of motives, character, and circumstances, it matters not—finally evolves certain moral effects called actions, we do not see how even Mr. Mill can help obeying. And if we are forced to obey, perhaps it does not after all so much matter, whether we will worship. Not that he could help even that, had the Cause so adjusted his character to his circumstances that he should worship him. But to most of Mr. Mill's feebler fellow mortals, who are but too conscious that in us the elements are less kindly mixed; who know we are not good now; that we are too weak to struggle without hope and without help to become good: to whom there is no possibility of happiness without some grounds of hope; and who can neither with so philosophic a composure remove all chance of happiness, nor yet

* Page 103.

all hope, that somehow we may, and sometime possibly shall, struggle upwards to goodness; for us this question of what the First Cause is, is absolutely the most important of all. On that depends whether we ever can become good; whether we ever shall secure happiness; whether it is any use troubling ourselves, and spoiling what little pleasure there is in our present life, by striving to rise to a better life. Can we strive? or do we only seem to strive, the question whether we shall really grow better or worse, being already decided, by the way in which the Universal Cause has adjusted our character; or by a blind fate, which in an uncreated and utterly purposeless world, has been for ever grinding out results of a more or less unsatisfactory but always inevitable character. To tell us we can afford to be ignorant, and are not concerned to know, that on which all this depends, sounds to us more like the maniacal mockery of despair than the sober utterance of a wise and good man. Far more true would it be to say, that we are only concerned with the First Cause in relation to what He is: that compared with this the effects He has produced, our present moral state amongst them are of no moment: that this is in truth the only question of all possible questions, it does mightily concern us to get answered—the only one on which we cannot afford to be ignorant. If the existence of a First Cause were but barely possible, the question of the moral character of that First Cause, must determine both the true aim and

the actual end of all human lives. And though its fearful importance can in no way affect or alter the answer, it does greatly affect our concern in obtaining the answer :—

> If our fate be death, give light and let us die;

without this tedious struggle, and still more torturing doubt.

The second refuge of the necessitarian is, that "if he does not believe in a First Cause" yet "he makes no assertion of non-commencement, he only declines to assert a commencement."* That is to say, he may assert we are not the causes of our own actions, because he knows as a matter of fact, that every action follows from some moral cause other than the man himself. And when asked to name his cause, he may fairly reply, he does not know whether there be any such moral cause or not. If he knows every action has a moral cause, that cause is the commencement: if he knows a chain of moral effects and causes, he knows that chain either has a commencement, and then that commencement is the uncaused cause; or he knows it has not a commencement. There is no third way for him to know. If he denies a First Cause, he is not only logically bound to admit an infinite non-commencement, he actually does assert it. To deny there is any First Cause, is to affirm there is no First Cause. If he say, he does not know whether his moral chain of effects and

* Page 496.

causes commences in a moral cause or not, then he does *not* know, that as a matter of fact every moral effect follows a moral cause; and his whole argument breaks down at its commencement. What Mr. Mill makes him say is, that he does know, but finds it vastly more convenient not to tell. But thus refusing to plead, judgment must go against him by default. He does not wish for truth.

II. In the next place, Mr. Mill affirms that the first hypothesis is not consistent with the facts, nor with consciousness. The facts are these: first, a volition is a moral effect, which certainly and invariably follows the corresponding moral causes.* This fact we admit. Secondly, "These moral causes or antecedents, are desires, aversions, habits, and dispositions, combined with outward circumstances."† This we deny, so far as that these are in every case the only possible or the whole cause. The will-force I exert in volition is a moral cause: when "I" create a volition, "I" am a moral cause.

"The consciousness I have is, not that I am able to act in opposition to the strongest present desire or aversion, but that I could have acted differently if I had preferred it. I am not conscious, that I could have chosen one thing while I preferred another."‡ The answer is, that this is not a complete account of what I am conscious of in volition, and it introduces into consciousness an element, which is not given in it.

* Page 501. † Page 500. ‡ Pages 504–5.

Balancing one motive against another, is not willing, but judging. What I am chiefly conscious of in volition is an effort. Beforehand, I know from past experience that however strong my desire is, I can resist it; but that no reasons, however true, no motives, however forcible, which I can urge on myself, will make me resist it, unless I make an effort sufficiently strong. If then I do resist it, I am at that moment conscious of making an effort, and exerting some force that seems to me peculiarly my own; which, it appears to me, no power whatever can make me exert, or prevent me from exerting, without my own consent. I am not conscious whether that effort is determined by a still stronger motive or not: it may be, but all I am conscious of is, that I make it. Afterwards, I am as distinctly conscious of having made an effort; and, if the temptation was long continued, or if I have been resisting the strong will of another, I am as sensibly exhausted by that effort, as after any physical exertion I ever made. If on the other hand I do not exert myself strongly enough to overcome my desire, I am conscious of being governed, instead of governing. As soon as I cease to consider what consciousness tells me, and begin to ask why did I resist? I can give several reasons no doubt for having made this effort; but this is reason, not consciousness; reason assigns, and cannot help assigning some non-creative cause; but as soon as the inductive philosopher leaves me conscience rushes back, and constantly affirms, it was not the desire, it was you

that willed it.* Now it is this effort for which Mr. Mill in his analysis of volition, leaves no room at all. If my volition is necessarily, or in fact, wholly determined by the strongest present desire, it will be decided without any effort: if these desires are equally balanced, they mutually destroy each other, and then no effort is possible; if one is ever so little stronger than the other, no effort is necessary. When the greater weight goes down, and the lesser up—it is Mr. Mill's own illustration—no effort is needed on the part of the scales, and any such effort would be that factor in the result, which Mr. Mill is bound to exclude. Now it may be right to follow reason with Mr. Mill, rather than so unreasonable a consciousness with Sir W. Hamilton; but to tell me I am not conscious of that exertion of force, of which I am as conscious as I am of my own existence, is neither philosophical, nor useful: as the old farmer observed, 'what signifies argufying a man out of his senses?'"

It seems to us there are four vices in this the strongest part of Mr. Mill's reasoning against the first hypothesis. First, that admitting a creative act must be inexplicable, he argues against this creative act, that it cannot be a fact unless it can be

* "This raised me a little into Thy light, that I knew as well that I had a will as that I lived. When then I did will or nill anything, I was most sure that none other than myself did will or nill: and I all but saw, that there was the cause of my sin."
St. Aug. Conf.

explained. Next, he assumes that if volition is not caused by motives of aversion or desire, it must be wholly uncaused; whereas he ought to have shown that "I" cannot by any possibility be the motive cause. If I have any will-force, or creative power, that may be the efficient cause of my volition. If an Omnipotent Creative Cause has given me that creative power, that is a sufficient reason for my having it. The third vice is, that he argues from our ignorance to our knowledge; as though our not knowing of any other relation between antecedent and sequent, than that of cause and effect, were the same as our knowing there is and can be no other. So that I must either will without any desire at all, or else my volition is wholly caused by the desire. The fourth vice is, gratuitously assuming that free will is inconsistent with fore-knowledge; or even with our being able to judge what men will do, and with there being any such uniformity of volitions as may suffice for statistical averages. An assumption unworthy of a philosopher.

Mr. Mill warns transcendentalists against the sin of bribing us to accept metaphysical falsehoods, by considerations of the evil consequences of denying them. It is not perhaps transcendentalists alone who are thus tempted. May not this intense dislike which modern thought entertains, to admitting so direct a connection between each man's spirit and God, as this free-will theory must assert, act as a very heavy bribe on experiential philosophers,

inclining them to adopt any theory rather than admit this?

III. In the third place, Mr. Mill maintains, the second hypothesis is not inconsistent with man's moral nature, or with his capacity for moral self-government. A good man is one whose desire to do right and aversion to do wrong, are strong enough to overcome, and in the case of perfect virtue to silence, any other conflicting aversion or desire.* "Not only our conduct,† but our character is in part amenable to our will; we can, by using the proper means, improve our character;" "and when we thus *voluntarily exert* ourselves, as it is our duty to do, for the improvement of our character, or when we act so as to deteriorate from it,—these acts presuppose that there was already something in our character which led us to do so, and accounts for our doing it."‡ What does he mean by our voluntary exertion? "I can influence my own volitions, but only as other people can influence my volition, by the employment of appropriate means." § How then about the volition to use those proper means, which it is my duty to employ? Is *that* volition under my power directly? or can I only influence that volition by the employment of those appropriate means; which shall make me will

* Page 505.

† How our conduct is amenable to our will, if it is wholly caused by our character and circumstances, Mr. Mill omits to say. The omission is important.

‡ Pages 516-17.

§ Page 305.

to use those other means, that shall improve my character? and so on, back *ad infinitum.* Indirect power presupposes direct power somewhere; surely a child might see the analysis could not stop there. If this is not fatalism, we should be glad to know what is. Even the indirect power is not mine; but the character which causes the faulty volition, causes also the volition to use such means as shall alter itself and its acts. And very considerate it is in it to do so. Only if it be such as causes me to deteriorate, I am equally helpless in the matter. And this is the proof that we are justly responsible for being what we are, and for acting as our character obliges us to act! But the smallest grain of free will here would be fatal; and therefore a theory of moral responsibility must be framed to exclude it. It is this.*

IV. "Responsibility means punishment:" the expectation that we shall be punished, and the consciousness we shall deserve punishment. The first is acquired by experience. From our parents, and from experience, we learn that others will hold us accountable for our actions; and this fact, Mr. Mill thinks, goes at least a great way in explaining our internal feeling of accountability. It may confirm, but it could not originate, the feeling, the main part of which is that we find we are accountable to ourselves. If I do this wrong deed, I know from past experience

* Pages 506–513.

I shall condemn myself for it; that the most insufferable feeling I can have, the avenging remorse and sense of shame, will arise within me; my own nature punishing me. If I do not condemn myself, nothing can persuade me I am justly accountable to others for the deed. Mr. Mill proceeds to explain, "that though a man cannot help acting as he does, his character being what it is, yet it is just he should be punished for it, if the expectation of punishment enables him to help it. There are two ends and only two, which justify punishment—the benefit of the offender himself, and the protection of others. It cannot be justly inflicted, on the ground of any affinity between guilt and punishment, or that it is a just retribution for guilt, but only in order to operate on the will. Thus to benefit a person cannot be to do him an injury: to punish him for his own good, provided the inflicter has any proper title to constitute himself a judge, is no more unjust than to administer medicine. By counterbalancing the influence of present temptation or bad habits, punishment restores the mind to that normal preponderance of the love of right, which the best moralists and theologians consider to constitute the true definition of our freedom."

We reply that it does not restore the love of right, but merely restrains from the doing wrong; that we cannot admit Mr. Mill's right to pronounce, *ex cathedra*, that the best theologians are those—very few and not we believe the most eminent—who have argued,

that liberty is not essential to attaining moral perfection, because we can never be absolutely free, until we are morally perfect; that to benefit me against my will, by medicine or punishment, is a gross injury and injustice, being both a direct invasion of my right to be treated as a rational being, and an actual moral degradation. Again: if I deserve punishment, only because my love of right is too weak, and my desire for wrong pleasures is too strong, and therefore punishment will help me to dislike the latter the most, then I equally deserve rewards; "by counterbalancing the influence of present temptation or bad habits," rewards "restore the mind to the normal preponderance of the love of right." By increasing its attractions, you necessarily increase my desire for it. And the more wicked I am, the greater reward I deserve; the stronger my evil desire is, the greater the reward that is to counterbalance it must be; if your first reward is insufficient, you must increase it till its attractions exceed those of the unlawful pleasure. In the case of offenders against society, it might not be prudent thus to strengthen their too feeble virtue by rewards. But it would be quite as just; and for children, and for all so far as their own improvement is concerned, rewards for evil-doers must be more moral than punishments, as tending directly to diminish misery, and increase the sum of human happiness.

If anyone finds this account of moral responsibility answers to their consciousness, we can only trust that they are prepared to abide by its conse-

quences. We are not: should we prove thus morally weak, we claim to be punished in the old way of retribution. This new punishment is torture. If the object of punishment is to alter my will, it is useless, and therefore cruel to punish me at all, unless the punishment be continued till the end is obtained, for if it fails it is an unmixed injury; and, therefore, if the first punishment prove too weak, it must be increased and continued till it prove effectual. It was on this principle that Cancellor was flogged to death. It was on this principle that the rack and boot were used. The good of the victims, and the good of society alike, demanded their wills should be changed. And in most cases they were changed. If this be his creed, who six years ago gave us his almost priceless essay on Liberty, from how great a height has he fallen!

We do not mean that it is any demerit in a philosopher, or in any man, that he changes his opinions; holding it to be, in some degree at least, the inevitable consequence of his continuing to think. But we cannot but think it a pity, when a well considered and deliberate opinion is thrown aside, not from its internal failure, but because it refuses to fit in with a foregone conclusion on another subject. In that essay on Liberty, Mr. Mill told us, "his object was to assert one very simple principle, as entitled to govern absolutely the dealings of society with the individual, in the way of compulsion and control; whether the means used be physical force in the way of legal

penalties, or the moral coercion of public opinion. That principle is, that the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilised community against his will, is to prevent harm to others. *His own good, either physical or moral*, is not a sufficient warrant: it is a good reason for remonstrating with him; but not for compelling him, or visiting him with any evil in case he do otherwise." * "If he spoils his own life by such mismanagement, we shall not for that reason desire to spoil it still further; instead of punishing him, we shall rather endeavour to alleviate his punishment; the worst we shall think ourselves justified in doing, is leaving him to himself. But if he has infringed the rules necessary for the protection of his fellow-creatures, society, as the protector of all its members, *must retaliate* on him; must inflict pain on him for the express purpose of punishment, and must take care it be sufficiently severe." †

The assertors of free-will could hardly desire a stronger practical argument against necessity than this: that it has compelled so acute and sagacious a thinker as Mr. Mill, to give up the principle he deemed so important, and to substitute in its place such an explanation of moral responsibility, such a code of injustice as that before us.

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* *Essay on Liberty*, pp. 21, 22. † *Ibid.* pp. 142, 143.

The last question we have to consider is this: is there any *à priori* element given us in consciousness; or can we explain the facts of consciousness by experience alone? The experiential and the *à priori* philosophies alike profess to start from consciousness, and the main question in debate between them is, what are its original data, and how can we ascertain them. Mr. Mill maintains that his opponents are wholly wrong in their interpretation of the phenomena of consciousness, in that they take its present testimony, and assume it is possible, with due care, to ascertain what are the facts to which it testifies. Whereas he says, "we have no means of interrogating it in the only circumstances in which it can possibly give us a trustworthy answer. Whatever is present in the first consciousness of the infant, would be the genuine testimony of consciousness, and could be as little discredited as our sensations themselves. But what is present then we cannot now ascertain."* Surely this position needs something more than mere assertion for its support. It is wholly contrary to all analogy, and therefore to all *primâ facie* probability, that consciousness alone, of all our natural properties, needs no development, no education. We know that our senses require education, ere we can obtain from them their genuine testimony: why are we to assume that, in the case of consciousness, this is only to be had when it is in that half-awakened, vague,

* Page 147.

indistinct state in which it exists in the infant, and that in its full energy it is necessarily deceptive? And on what ground is it assumed it *is* pure and unmixed in the infant? How do we know that consciousness is even then free from all foreign elements, not in any way moulded, influenced, altered by any hereditary quality, by the infant's physical constitution, by the peculiarity of its nervous system, or even by the presence of that mind, which some say it does not get from sensation, but brings, not in entire forgetfulness, and not in utter nakedness, from its home in God?

This being the difficulty, we must, Mr. Mill tells us, be the more careful not to admit any belief as an original fact of consciousness, unless it is fully proved that it never could have been acquired by experience. Whereas Sir W. Hamilton admits, as a sufficient proof of its necessity, the fact that we cannot now get rid of it. "Theoretically, he claims for science an exclusive jurisdiction over the whole domain" of consciousness; "practically, he gives science nothing to do except to resolve some of these beliefs into others." And he continually charges him with receiving the testimony of consciousness in a loose and unscientific way, accepting it as to some facts, and rejecting it as to others, just as suits his immediate object. This is so very unlike Sir W. Hamilton, it requires to be looked into. Certainly, he did imagine it was a part of the work of science, and probably he may, in common with most scientific men, have thought it a very important part of that

work, to collect the particular facts of consciousness, to reduce them under more general facts, and so to gather them all up into the simplest, fewest, and most general principles in which they could be expressed. Thus he would not have rested satisfied with stating, that our belief in the veracity of memory is an ultimate fact, for it admits of being resolved into the more general fact of our belief in the veracity of all our intuitions, and can be included and announced in that. This work of reduction formed indeed a main part of his work as a philosopher, and he confessedly left it unfinished. But that he did not consider it the whole that science has to do, is evident from the three rules he gave us—of which Mr. Mill quotes only two, and himself requires only one—by which to determine whether any apparent fact of consciousness is to be regarded as an original or an acquired belief—an enquiry quite as important in his view as the former. His rules are: 1st, no fact can be assumed as a fact of consciousness, but what is ultimate and simple; 2nd, no fact which can be reduced to a generalisation from experience. This is the only test Mr. Mill demands; his phrase, "cannot have been acquired by experience," expressing nothing more than this, though expressing it less exactly and completely. Lastly, we must show "that it lies at the root of all experience," i.e. that no experience is possible, unless this belief, this mode of thought, is already present with us.* It is clear,

* *Lectures on Metaphysics*, vol. i. pp. 268-270.

then, that if further research should resolve a fact which he regarded as ultimate into a generalisation from experience, this would not be a refutation, but a continuation of his work. And if, finally, all these supposed data of consciousness should prove resolvable into one universal *à priori* principle; or if all should be shown to have been acquired by experience except one, which should lay at the root of all experience, this would be but the completion of Sir W. Hamilton's work, and the final confirmation of his belief—that only on the grounds of a necessary belief, only on the theory of *à priori* forms of thought, can philosophy establish itself. But so little does Mr. Mill care to enter into the scope and aim of his opponent's labours, that he assumes Sir W. Hamilton is false to his own principles, whenever he finds him succeeding in tracing up a belief or notion of which we cannot now divest ourselves, into a generalisation from experience; and, ignorant of the only possible scientific method, whenever he asserts of another that it cannot have been acquired by experience, because that experience presupposes it. Preoccupied with this mistaken notion of what Sir W. Hamilton ought to be about,* when he finds him saying, "It is truly idle to attempt imagining the steps by which we may have acquired the notion of Extension, when in fact we are unable to imagine to ourselves the possi-

* Page 149.

bility of that notion not being always in our possession," he interprets this, not by Sir W. Hamilton's own rules, but by one of his own invention, which he ascribes to him; and charges him with saying, "it is idle to enquire how we have acquired the notion of extension, when we cannot now imagine ourselves without it." Whereas, if we only take for granted what on the face of things is a highly probable circumstance—that Sir W. Hamilton intended in his own words to follow his own rules, and not Mr. Mill's—the meaning of the above sentence is both obvious, and not, we venture to think, altogether unscientific. "It is truly an idle problem, when the experiential philosopher would have us imagine the series of experiences and sensations from which we may have generalised this notion of extension; when the presence of that notion is so assumed in each step, from last to first, that we cannot imagine ourselves taking the step, without also imagining the notion to be already in our possession." Thus, he might have said of Mr. Bain's account of the process by which this notion is acquired; that, assuming we already have the notion, the sensations of muscular fibre can give us the measure of different spaces; but that as we cannot be conscious of movement at all, unless we are conscious of space, no muscular sensations can by themselves give us that consciousness; for we cannot take the step from a muscular sensation to movement, unless the notion of space, of extension, is already obtained. Now,

whether Sir W. Hamilton is right or wrong in this particular assertion of his respecting Extension, it is no more a rejection of the only scientific method, than is Mr. Mill's assertion respecting our belief in the veracity of memory—that we can give no reason for believing it, which does not presuppose it, and assume it to be well founded.

The crucial test to which Mr. Mill would bring this *à priori* psychology, as expounded by Sir W. Hamilton, is given us in the following argument.* "The doctrine that forms the basis of Sir W. Hamilton's system of psychology is, that mind and matter, an ego and non-ego, are original data of consciousness. If however it can be shown, in consistency with natural laws, that the element of non-ego, and therefore of ego, may have been acquired by experience, we are bound by his own law of parsimony, and according to his and all sound philosophy, to assign it to that origin."† This obligation we fully admit. But, we must remark that the basis of Sir W. Hamilton's theory is not stated here with that distinctness which marks all his own analyses. His own words are—"All the mental phenomena comprise one essential element, and are possible only under one necessary condition. This element or condition is consciousness; or the knowledge that I—that the ego—exists in some determinate state."‡ We presume that Mr. Mill agrees in the first part of

* Page 204. † Page 197.

‡ *Lectures on Metaphysics*, vol. i. chap xi. p. 182.

this statement, i.e. that no mental phenomena, not the simplest sensation, is possible without consciousness. A sensation of which nothing is sensible; a feeling which nothing feels, may be a nonentity, but certainly is unknowable; and what nothing can know, it is useless to discourse of. Both philosophers agree also on another point, of no small importance in the decision of the question; viz., that as self is only known as it is distinguished from non-self; and non-self only as distinguished from self, these two conceptions, however they originate, must originate simultaneously.* Agreeing so far, the difference between them is this. Sir. W. Hamilton thought that consciousness, even of the simplest sensation, is the consciousness that "I" feel it—that I exist in that present state. Whilst Mr. Mill, admitting that consciousness is the recognition by the mind of its own acts and affections,† denies that the recognition of the act involves the recognition of the actor; and maintains, that the knowledge that "I" feel this affection, is acquired subsequently through experience.

But really to make out his point, Mr. Mill must do more than he proposes. He must not only show us a process by which the notion of self and not self may have been generalised from experience, he must show this without giving to the experience from which the notion of non-ego is to be evolved the assistance of the notion of ego, or *vice versâ*. He

* Page 214. † Page 108.

must show also that this notion does not lie at the root of that experience by which he says it may be acquired. And he must not, if he means to prove anything at all against this *à priori* philosophy, evolve this notion by the help of any other *à priori* fact of consciousness, or necessary belief, or form of thought whatever. For, as Mr. Masson justly remarks,* so far as the truth of the experiential theory is concerned, it matters not much which *à priori* fact we admit; for, if we are in for a grain of *à priori* element, we might just as well be in for the whole. And in Mr. Mill's account of the matter, we are in for the whole, and more.

In his eleventh chapter, he shows us what our idea of matter really is; how we acquire it, and why we learn to distinguish it as a non-ego. In the next chapter, he tells us what we really know of mind; what is the distinction between mind and matter, and how the notion of ego is derived from the united experience of our own and the observation of other people's feelings.

We start on this enquiry from the first germ of consciousness, as yet undistinguishing between self and non-self. But what instrument are we to be allowed wherewith to evolve out of the consciousness of isolated sensations—which is all each present moment gives us—the fabric of experience? Apparently, Mr. Mill allows us a good deal, for the first thing

* *Recent British Philosophy.*

he postulates * is "the human mind," all complete, and also altogether undefined; secondly, "a capacity of expectation; in other words, having had actual sensations, we are capable of forming the conception of possible sensations;" and thirdly, "the Laws of Association of Ideas." But in the following chapter, we find that by the human mind he intends merely "a permanent possibility of feeling;" and by "my mind," nothing "but the succession of my feelings." So that what he really postulates here, is not what everyone would understand from his words—a living, acting, thinking being, but merely a series of feelings, or thread of consciousness. It is however impossible to start with this: we must go further back, and show how this series, this thread, is formed out of single sensations. Of that second postulate, also, as of the first, we must say it is stated in a very loose and unscientific manner. The feeling of expectation is a complex feeling; the art of arguing from actual to possible sensations, is a very complex act; and these two acts are not the same; we can conceive a possible sensation, without expecting it; we can expect an actual sensation to recur, without arguing from it to possible sensations. Both then should have been analysed, and given to us in their primary elements, not thrown to us in an undistinguished lump as they are here.

In this postulate he concedes to the transcendental

* Page 190.

philosopher the first of his fundamental premises; i.e. that the mind has capacities of its own, which it does not derive from its experience of sensations. He has here then abandoned the position he once maintained, that "we have no ground for believing there is any idea, feeling, or *power* in the human mind, whose origin need be referred to any other source than experience."* For here, starting from the first consciousness, he assumes the human mind already possesses a certain capacity, which cannot originate in experience, inasmuch as he makes it precede experience; he acknowledges that without it we cannot commence the acquisition of experience—we cannot even form the primary conception of self and not self. He tells us, indeed, that the fact of our possessing this power is proved by experience; but this is no equivalent for the assertion that it originates in experience. Experience proves to me I possess two hands: it does not prove that my hands originated in experience. In his third postulate he concedes the second *à priori* principle; i.e. that the mind has a structure and laws of its own, in its own right, and prior to experience. To quote again from Mr. Masson, "it is not a pure passivity, but treats what is put upon it, or into it, in some manner dependent on its own structure." For if it had not, why should it naturally and inevitably associate its isolated sensations together; or why in one way and

* *Dissertations and Discussions,* vol. i. art. Coleridge, p. 409.

by one law more than another? which Mr. Mill here asserts that it does. These appear to us to be admissions, whose importance Mr. Mill has hardly appreciated. If experience proves this to be so, it puts an absolutely impassable barrier to the anatomical school of psychology, which, denying everything to the mind in its first origin but sentiency, maintains that all its present powers, modes of thought, beliefs, and ideas are generated from the multifarious experience of nervous currents. If when our sentiency first began, we already had a capacity of expectation, and a mental structure impelling us to associate sensations together in modes of its own, we may fairly warn physiologists off the field. Whatever results can be obtained out of mere sentiency, we will thank them for giving us; the results of mind can never be thus explained, as long as this capacity and this structure must be presupposed, ere one sensation can be consciously associated with another. But in stating this last postulate, Mr. Mill has altered his form of expression. He does not say, "the mind has the power of associating," but "similar phenomena *tend to be thought of*" together. Perhaps he only means that sensations, amongst their other attributes, possess this passive one, of "tending to be thought of" together. But what ground have we for asserting it is a property inherent in any phenomena to be thought of at all? and if it were, what possible means could we have of ascertaining it? Experience tells me I have a tendency to associate that group of phenomena

I call gunpowder, with that wholly distinct group I call a pheasant; but it tells, and can tell me nothing whatever of their tendency to be thought of. The expression is evidently an improper one.

We have got then a conscious sentiency, endowed with a capacity of expectation, and possessing a structure of its own, that impels it to associate its sensations together in certain fixed modes. And this Mr. Mill tells us is all he postulates. It is a good deal: quite enough for Sir W. Hamilton's philosophy: but is it all? "Setting out from these premises, the psychological theory maintains there are associations naturally, and even necessarily, generated by the order of our sensations and of our reminiscences of sensation, which, supposing no intuition of an external world to have existed in consciousness, would inevitably generate the belief, and cause it to be regarded as intuitive." It appears, then, that to generate any association at all amongst sensations, the faculty of memory must be postulated, over and above the capacities of expectation and association. Had Mr. Mill taken the trouble to analyse those two postulates, he would have found memory was postulated with them. Now every act of memory involves (we take Sir W. Hamilton's analysis here, as Mr. Mill gives us none) not merely reminiscence, but also a discrimination, or perception of one sensation as distinct from another; it involves therefore the power of comparing them together, and determining whether they are like, or unlike; it involves the perception, that

the particular sensation I have at this moment is similar, or not similar to one that preceded it. It involves therefore the notions of time, and of number. For it is only in the relations of time and number, in respect that one sensation was before, and the other after, that two perfectly similar sensations can be distinguished from each other and known as two. And if we do not distinguish them as two, how can we associate them together? But why should we, or how could we think of one sensation as preceding, and the other as following, if we had no conception of time? The notion of before and after is the notion of time. How was this notion acquired? Not from experience of two successive sensations, for it lies at the root of that experience; they are not successive except in time, and to perceive them as successive is to think them in time. Accordingly, the Kantian explanation, and Sir W. Hamilton's,* is that Time is a necessary form of thought, so that we are unable to think of anything out of time. But this explanation is incompatible with any but an *à priori* philosophy; and Mr. Mill passes over the question without taking the slightest notice of it.

Our conscious sentiency, which has not yet become a series of feelings, and is not yet aware of a series of sensations, has already proved itself to be much more. Being set by Mr. Mill to the task of generating associations, it has in the effort to obey postu-

* The difference between Kant's doctrine and Sir W. Hamilton's on this subject is immaterial to our present purpose.

lated for itself, and proved it possesses all these new capacities of memory, comparison, and discrimination, together with the ideas of time and number. It is quite clear it did not acquire them from any experience of mere sensations, however often repeated. "Without memory, and all that memory involves, each individual infinitesimal moment of sensation would stand isolated from every other, and would in fact constitute a separate existence."* Without memory, and all that memory involves, our conscious sentiency can never become a series of feelings, but must remain a mere chaotic heap of separate sensations. If it could in any way acquire these faculties, it must acquire them all at one and the same instant, since each one is dependent on the rest. We cannot remember a sensation without discriminating it from other sensations, nor discriminate without comparing it, and thinking it in time; nor compare without remembering. This difficulty does not affect Sir W. Hamilton's theory, which gives these as the conditions of consciousness; but it does affect Mr. Mill's theory, who gives no explanation of it whatever.

But can these powers and these ideas have been acquired? Not only does the mind possess them before its experience can begin, it possesses them on this theory before itself exists. Before mind exists as a series of feelings, there is a something, remembering isolated feelings and sensations, comparing them with each other, noticing their succession in time, and so

* *Lectures on Metaphysics*, by Sir W. Hamilton, vol. i.

forming them into that series which, after it is formed, will distinguish itself as a series of feelings, with a background of possibilities of feelings, calling itself mind; from that other series of its own sensations and permanent possibilities of sensation, which it will call matter; and which, from that time forward, and not before, it will recognise respectively as self and not self. But even yet these feelings and sensations are not united into one series. Association of like sensations, &c. does not tend to form them into a series, but rather to break them up into distinct groups. Expectation cannot form it. Memory of distinct or of grouped sensations will not construct a series; to a sentiency that possesses the notion of time, memory may give the conception of sensations occurring before and after each other. But to unite these into one series, they must be remembered not merely as successive, but as successively felt by the same sentiency that now remembers them. Our feelings and sensations cannot then become a series at all, unless the consciousness of self is already present; and if the ego is present, the non-ego is also there.

Here then we stop; it is useless to follow Mr. Mill through a process which thus recklessly assumes everything, the origin of which it professes to account for, and accounts for the acquisition of nothing but what it has already assumed to be possessed. In the next four pages the conception of matter is evolved out of the experience of sensations, by the aid of all that has been already postulated, together with the

following *à priori* or unaccounted-for elements:—1, an ultimate belief, that in the same circumstances* I shall have the same sensations; 2, another ultimate belief—to which we are impelled by the laws of our minds—in reality, or a substratum; 3, the power of imagination; 4, of generalisation; 5, the notion of order and idea of causation; 6, of duration; 7, of existence; 8, of power; 9, of conditions; 10, of possibility. And then comes this very remarkable statement.† "We find that the modifications which are taking place—in our possibilities of sensation—are mostly quite independent of our presence or absence." How we can have found out that *we* can be either present or absent, whilst we are yet unconscious of self; or that "modifications of possible sensations," or of anything else, can take place in the absence of our own sentiency, whilst as yet we have no notion of not-self, Mr. Mill does not trouble himself to inform us. Yet it is certain he sees this is quite possible, for in the next sentence he goes on, "when this state of mind has been arrived at, then, and from that time forward"—we advance in our conceptions for a page and a half, before we at last become conscious of self and non-self. But even this is nothing to what follows, as the crowning step, by which we finally attain that consciousness. After some further account of the subsequent associations of possible sensations, he

* The only circumstances we can know here, are the sensations or feelings of which we are conscious.

† Page 195.

proceeds: "The possibilities remain in existence, are independent of *our will, our presence,* and everything that belongs *to us.* We find, too, that they belong as much to *other* human and sentient beings *as to ourselves.* We find *other people* expecting the same permanent possibilities that we expect, but that they do not have the same actual sensations. The world of possible sensations is as much in other beings as it is in me: it is an external world. If this explanation of the origin and growth of the idea of matter contains nothing at variance with natural laws, it is at least an admissible supposition, that the element of non-ego—which we certainly do find in our present consciousness—may not be one of its primitive elements. And, if admissible, it ought to be received as true."* "But without the element of non-self, we cannot have that of self."†

We reply, first: that if the conception of self cannot exist without the conception of non-self, it is contrary to natural laws that this conception should be present in the mind before it is formed; and by its presence should bring about its own conception, as in Mr. Mill's account it is supposed to do.

Secondly. If the mind exists only as series of feelings, it is contrary to natural laws that it should act before it exists, and by acting should cause its own existence, as by Mr. Mill's account, it must be assumed to do.

* Page 197. † Page 214.

Thirdly. It is contrary to all we know of the natural history of an infant, to imagine that such a process as Mr. Mill has described, can go on in its mind before it has yet learnt to distinguish anything whatever from itself, or itself from anything else. This distinction every child with a healthy brain does make, by the time it is four or five months old at the latest; clearly at that age recognising its mother, distinguishing her from all other groups of actual and possible sensations, and responding to her emotions.* Is it credible that infant has already a notion of causation? or that it has argued through so intricate a course of reasoning, that this group of sensations, being permanently possible, and *recognised as such by its father as well as by itself*, must be something different from its own actual sensations, something external to itself?

Throughout the whole of these two chapters, Mr. Mill has apparently forgotten the real question he had put before us; and instead of showing how we can acquire the conception of self and not self, has endeavoured to explain what is our notion of matter and of mind. As a matter of fact, the distinctions between self and not self, and that between mind and matter (though the latter be really involved in the former), are not acquired at the same time. The first is evidently possessed by the child at a few months old; but it not only has no notion of the

* For a full account of these phenomena, and what they imply, see p. 208.

distinction between mind and matter then, it probably never will become aware of it, unless it is carefully taught to observe it. At four or five years old, many a child has stoutly denied it, battling in behalf of his own identity, that his body and mind are one ego, and inseparable even in thought. Our non-ego includes all other minds than our own, quite as clearly as it includes all matter.

We think then that Mr. Mill has failed to show us that the conception of self and non-self can have been acquired; he has accounted for our acquiring it, by a process which assumes we already possess it. The distinction he draws between mind and matter is just as compatible with Sir W Hamilton's theory of the original data of consciousness, as with his own. We proceed to examine what that distinction is.

Of mind, he tells us, "we have no conception, as distinguished from its states, its succession of feelings;" and yet "our notion of mind is the notion of a permanent something, contrasted with the perpetual flux of states and feelings which we refer to it." To what it? Again and again Mr. Mill assures us the noun of this "it" is "a series of feelings." The mind recoils from such a circular whirlpool of words as this. Again, my conception of mind as something distinct from its conscious states and feelings may be, and very likely is, utterly erroneous and groundless; but at once to assure me I "neither have nor can imagine" such a conception, and then to devote

several pages to proving it a false conception, is surely a self-contradiction.

Mind is finally defined "a series of feelings," with a background of permanent possibilities of feeling.* Matter is defined as a permanent possibility of sensation.† It becomes a nice question what is the difference between the two; and this Mr. Mill somewhat indirectly states, as follows :‡ "The permanent possibility of feeling, which forms my notion of myself, is distinguished by important differences from the permanent possibilities of sensation, which form my notion of what I call external objects. In the first place, each of these last represent a small and perfectly definite part of the series which, in its entireness, forms my conscious existence." We thought we had been told that the whole series of these permanent possibilities of sensation, which constitute my external world, my Cosmos, was my non-ego. Now we are told that it forms a part of another series, which, in its entireness, forms my conscious existence. And a few lines further on, we find the series of feelings which constitute my mind, and myself, described in direct distinction from those possibilities of sensation, as, "the particular series of feelings which constitute *my own life.*" Is then "my conscious existence" so very much greater than "my own life?" Or, in what sense can possibilities of sensation, which I never felt, which possibly I never shall feel, and of

* Pages 211, 212. † Page 198. ‡ Page 206.

many of which I can form no idea what my sensations would be if I did experience them,—in what sense can all these be said to form "distinct parts" of "my conscious existence?"

Then, whereas my non-self is composed of single and distinct groups of possible sensations certified by experience, "my notion of myself includes all possibilities of sensation, definite or indefinite, certified by experience or not, which I may (choose to) imagine inserted in my actual and conscious states." Thus in a new sense, "I am a part of all I see;" for my notion of myself includes my non-self. I conceive myself to be, not only all I actually am, but all I can imagine myself to be.* This is the first distinction, and the second is like unto it. "What I call outward objects are possibilities of sensation alone, whereas the series I call myself, includes along with them, and called up by them, all those thoughts, emotions, volitions, and permanent possibilities of these, which are generally distinct from them, and do not occur in groups." All non-self then is self, but all self is not non-self. All that is matter is also mind: but all that is mind is not matter. If this be all the difference, how can Mr. Mill account for the width and depth of the distinction we do in fact, and irresistibly, draw between them? Mr. Mill says,

* Compare this doctrine with that which he charges Sir W. Hamilton with maintaining, page 292. "So that potential existence is exactly the same as actual existence; the difference is formal only;" and so forth.

though they are the same things viewed in different relations, yet as soon as we give them different names, we learn to think of them as different things.* The name may do something, but not all; it could not make us regard mind and matter as the two great divisions of the universe, which have nothing but existence in common. And for the still wider gulf between self and non-self, we have no name whatever. There only remains one distinction more, the most important of all. "Outward objects are possibilities of sensation to other beings as well as to me; but the series of feelings which constitute my own life is confined to myself; no other sentient being shares it with me." Other beings, being portions of my non-self, and known to me only as distinct groups of possible sensations, each of them forms a small and perfectly definite part of that series which, in its entireness, forms my conscious existence. It is only by inference from certain actual sensations which I learn to refer to those special groups of my own possible sensations,† that I am led to attribute to these groups the possession of a series of feelings similar to, but not the same as, that particular series which constitutes my own life. It is difficult, then, very difficult to see how their inferred possession of an hypothetical series of feelings, which is wholly the result of the distinction my series of feelings makes between its own permanent possibilities of grouped sensations, and its own series of ungrouped feelings, can be adduced as

* Page 193. † Page 208.

at once the cause and the proof of that distinction, of which it is the result.

If the wearied reader asks what we mean by the preceding paragraph, we frankly confess we have not the vaguest conception. We have painfully struggled through it, in the endeavour to follow Mr. Mill's argument, substituting his definitions of words for the words themselves, to see if by any possibility we can win the understanding of what he means. Having altogether failed, we leave matter, to consider what the psychological theory of mind really amounts to.

Does the theory which resolves mind into a series of feelings, with a background of possibilities of feeling, amount to more than the resolution to call it a mere series of feelings; all the while including, and intending to include under that name, a great number of capacities, ideas, forms of thought, and necessary beliefs, together with their permanent substratum—which neither are feelings, nor can be in any way resolved into feelings? Or if Mr. Mill thinks they are resolvable into feelings, why has he not resolved them? A series of feelings, which "looks before and after, and sighs for what is not," which possesses ideas of time and space, of power and causation, of right and wrong, of God and of itself, is more than a mere series of feelings. And, therefore, what is the philosophy which calls it by that name? Mr. Mill will tell us: "A system which affects to resolve all the phenomena of the human mind into sensation" and feeling, "by a process which essentially consists

in merely calling all states of mind, however heterogeneous, by that name—a philosophy explaining nothing, distinguishing nothing, leading to nothing:" and therefore "the shallowest set of doctrines ever passed off on a cultivated age as a psychological system." * Mr. Mill however adheres to his name. His words are these: "If we speak of the mind as a series of feelings, we are reduced to the alternative of believing that the mind or ego is something different from any series of feelings or possibilities of them; or of accepting the paradox that something which, *ex hypothesi*, is but a series of feelings, can be aware of itself as a series. The truth is, we are here face to face with that final inexplicability, at which, *as Sir W. Hamilton observes*, we inevitably arrive when we reach ultimate facts. The true incomprehensibility perhaps is not in the theory, but in the fact itself; that a series of feelings, of which the infinitely greater part is past or future, can be gathered up as it were into a single present conception, accompanied by a belief in reality. I think by far the wisest thing we can do is to accept the inexplicable fact, without any theory of how it takes place." †

There is no ultimate inexplicable fact here for us to accept. The fact to which we are here face to face is, first of all, that of two possible hypotheses concerning mind, one of which must be true; the first contradicts Mr. Mill's theory, the second contradicts

* *Dissertations and Discussions*, by J. S. Mill, vol. i. Art. Coleridge, p. 410.

† Page 213.

itself. Granted there is a something called mind, then mind is something different from a mere series of feelings, or else, it is nothing but a series of feelings.

That a mere series of feelings, the greater part of which is past or future, should be able to gather itself up into a single present conception, and believe in its own reality, would indeed be inexplicable, but as Mr. Mill has abundantly proved, it is not a fact.

That a thinking, living mind, gifted with intelligence, reason, and memory, and bringing with it the conception of time, and the belief in reality, should be able to remember its past, and think of its future states, is indeed a fact, as Mr. Mill has demonstrated; but then it is not inexplicable. It is a general fact, obtained by induction from a vast number of facts given us in experience; and it can be explained by being resolved back into these. That those experiences, if reduced to their elements, will be found ultimately to rest on inexplicable but necessary beliefs, is what Sir W. Hamilton asserts, and what we understood Mr. Mill blamed him for asserting.* But if true of this, it is equally true of every fact which experience gives us.

That Mr. Mill prefers accepting a monstrous paradox to accepting a truth he has himself demonstrated —*i. e.* that the mind *is* something more than a mere series of feelings—appears indeed to be a fact, and certainly is inexplicable; but then it is not an ultimate fact. That he should ask us to accept this

* Pages 59, 60.

paradox, because that inconsequent thinker, who, being fit for little but the drudgery of compiling a dictionary of opinions which he knew but could not comprehend, wasted his own life, and well-nigh ruined our philosophy, because he would be a philosopher,—because Sir W. Hamilton says, we inevitably reach a final inexplicability when we reach an ultimate fact,—this is indeed a very singular phenomenon, but it is not, perhaps, wholly inexplicable. Does not Mr. Mill see, that if Sir. W. Hamilton was what he alleges and believes him to be, he has simply no authority at all on any metaphysical question? that his asserting any opinion might discredit, but cannot possibly increase its probability? From what unconscious feeling is it then that Mr. Mill never seems to be so thoroughly at his ease in stating his own metaphysical doctrines, as when he can give them to us with the prefix, "as Sir William Hamilton says?"

But not under the authority of that great master of thought can Mr. Mill hope to shelter his paradox. It is quite true that Sir W. Hamilton taught that ultimate facts given in consciousness are inexplicable. It was because he taught this in all its consequences that Mr. Mill has written this book against him. But he taught that an ultimate fact must be ultimate and simple; a series of feelings is complex, and all its achievements are explicable. We think it more than probable he would have said Mr. Mill's conduct is incomprehensible; but it is certain he

would never have admitted that the alternative, "either this theory must be false, or a self-contradiction must be true," presents us with any ultimate and inexplicable dilemma of consciousness. Mr. Mill has been highly praised for the singular candour of this admission; we put implicit faith in his candour; but the merit of this confession would have been more patent, had the fact admitted been less so.

We cannot but think that Mr. Mill in this, his first work in pure metaphysics, has disappointed just expectation. In leaving the fields of practical philosophy, he seems to have left his genius behind him. Even the peculiar "cunning of his right hand"—even his unexcelled logical power avails him little, so continually does he fail to see distinctly the conception with which he is fencing. The deficiency of analysis throughout the whole work is simply intolerable; what few analyses there are, are either taken from Sir W. Hamilton,* or if begun by himself, are left half completed; in general, he wholly refuses this drudgery. And the result is, he can make nothing of complex conceptions; even so simple a rule as that a negative conception is no conception, with which, as a logician, he must have been perfectly familiar, produces a mere indistinct haze when he tries to work out its result in a complex conception. Again,

* Two or three also are given us from Mr. James Mill.

closely as he has studied Sir W. Hamilton's opinions in detail, we have shown some reason for thinking he has failed to see the tendency and aim of his work as a whole. Mr. Masson has given us, in a couple of pages, a far more complete view of this than can be gained from Mr. Mill's whole work. And if he himself understands the tendency of his own psychological system, it is more than he has enabled his students to do, seeing that in keeping out one *à priori* datum of consciousness, he has called in a host of others; in much to be admired disorder it is true, and not taking them on board at the outset, but straggling in on the voyage, just as he finds one or another necessary to keep experience from stranding on the shallows.

There is another feature of Mr. Mill's philosophy to which we must advert, however briefly, because we believe it will be found generally characteristic of this whole school. The great difficulty of the experiential philosophers is the chasm between mind and matter. They do excellent service in pushing up matter to its most subtle nerve currents; but still these are material; and in reducing mind to its simplest elements of consciousness; but still it is conscious mind. Having thus brought up their forces on each side, as near as they can come, they get over the chasm—which is as wide as ever—by the easy process of ignoring its existence; and first confusing, then changing the names used, first speaking of nerve currents as though they might possess some of the

attributes of thoughts, and then roundly calling them ideas, they land themselves on the other side; and then turn round, in wonder we do not follow them, telling us they are the only philosophers,* who follow science fearlessly, whilst those others are only preachers, seeking, not for truth, but for safety. But science has not as yet led us over that chasm; and we fear to cross it on a bridge of words. Though not so broadly evident, yet not less really is this characteristic of the school to be found in Mr. Mill's writings. He, too, is ever charging his opponents with being unscientific and unphilosophical; he, too, is continually driven, however reluctantly, to attribute their persistence in error, to a cowardly fear of the evil consequences of admitting the demonstrated truth. He, too, seems as if he could not see the difficulty, which, they seeing, cannot leap over to join him.

As long as he is applying given principles to the solution of practical questions; as long as he has to do with the process of an argument, he proves himself a most able instructor and guide. But when he has to grapple with a metaphysical problem, it almost invariably arrives that the central, the metaphysical difficulty, escapes him. In discussing the question whether or no we can comprehend what is infinite —the infinite element of the conception—the only one which presents any metaphysical difficulty, slips

* See a very amusing and interesting article in *Fraser's Magazine* for Dec. 1865, "Carlyle."

out of his grasp, and leaves him battling about the indefinite. In building up his own theory, he shows very clearly what results sensations and experience of sensations, combined and worked up together, can produce; the only purely metaphysical question—of what nature is that which works them up and combines them—this never occurs to him. In* showing how the sensations of muscular flexes may give us the notion of extension, every part of the process is quite beautifully worked out, except the one part that needs explaining—how a passive sensation can change into the notion of movement without the idea of space. So it was in his treatise on Utilitarianism. Whilst successfully defending the Utilitarian theory of morals from all practical objections and all possible misconceptions, the metaphysical question—which, as he says,† must be settled before any science of morals can be built up—this he never once sees. He makes no attempt whatever to reconcile the Utilitarian superstructure with the existence in our minds of that internal sense of duty, that idea of right and sense of obligation to do right, which is the essence of conscience, and underlies all possible standards of morality. He admits its existence, but gives no account of its origin. How the idea of "tending to happiness," got changed into the now wholly distinct idea of "being right," this, and all the other metaphysical

* Chapter xiii. † Page 2.

questions involved, he merely ignores. And yet on his own showing, no system of morality can have a true basis which does not solve them.

We do not pretend to say what the judgment of posterity on the questions involved in Mr. Mill's Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy will be. And in truth, not having any means of ascertaining whether posterity will be better or worse metaphysicians than the present generation, we do not particularly care to know. What they will be in this respect may possibly depend, in no slight measure, on the manner in which we, in this present day, deal with our own metaphysical difficulties; more especially on the clearness with which we discern them, and the patience and good temper with which we submit to them. Of one thing we have no doubt: whatever Sir W. Hamilton's philosophy be worth, we cannot afford to adopt Mr. Mill's in its place.

Must it then be admitted, as is so often asserted, that the discussion of such questions as Mr. Mill has here brought before us is altogether useless; that it can only serve to show the idle skill of each metaphysician who overthrows the fame of his predecessor, only to be overthrown in his turn, so that the dispute may go on for ever, with no more profitable result than this—the raising matter for fresh disputes? By no means let us allow this. That the discussion of these and similar questions will go on—if not for ever, yet until the present dispensation itself ceases—we most sincerely hope, nay, we firmly believe it. Any-

thing more fatal to the best interests of mankind than their being, under their present circumstances, put into possession of absolute truth, cannot be conceived; unless it were their being able to rest without it. But the discussion has many positive and practical results of the highest value, and progress is made by its continuance. Every well-fought attack produces its quota of real progress, though it be not always that which the assailant intended. It not only clears away confusion and error, it confirms all that is true in what it assails, and shows what is still wanting to its complete demonstration. If it should prove, as we believe it will, that so thorough and able an attack as Mr. Mill has made on Sir W. Hamilton's philosophy, has failed to shake its fundamental principles, then he has done more to establish its truth than even he could have done had he written folios in its defence.

And yet it may be questioned whether the time for promoting philosophy by this system of alternate battles is not going by; whether it has not now reached a stage where it is possible, and would be profitable, for transcendentalists and experientialists —each keeping on their proper standing ground, which is most of all essential—yet to labour in conscious unity of purpose for the establishment and extension of their common science. Transcendentalists, indeed, have no reason to complain of being forced to fight a retreating battle, by which they win so much; when in every supposed *à priori* fact their opponents

endeavour to reduce to the results of experience, they do but bring out more clearly and incontrovertibly the irreducible *à priori* element. And if victory were to transcendental preachers as pleasant, or of as much consequence, as the advance of reasoned truth, they might well rest content with seeing their work so ably done for them by philosophers. But this does not advance philosophy as much as it gratifies feeling. That Mr. Mill, in working out such a problem as the psychological theory of mind and matter, would be compelled to admit an *à priori* element, they must have known beforehand; that in the present backward state of philosophical analysis, he would be obliged to admit several, they might, not without regret, have foretold. But that he should have admitted so many, without making any attempt whatever to reduce them one under another, this is no gain; it is a retrograde step—a falling back from the point to which Sir W. Hamilton had carried the analysis. Had he endeavoured to carry it on further; had he, for instance, essayed to reduce our actually existing belief in causation, and in a real substratum, both which now appear to us to be distinct and intuitive or necessary beliefs; or to reduce our moral perception of right and wrong, and our intellectual perception of true and false, into one original element or principle of our nature, differently educated by experience and its associations; then all his success or his failure had been gain. Nor do we believe that any would have hailed that success with greater

pleasure, than those disciples of Sir W. Hamilton, who most fully agree with, and most reverently admire their great master, having learnt from him to prize truth above all things. Nor would he have served his own school less effectually; for, if it should ever prove possible altogether to eliminate the *à priori* element, it is surely only by some such method as this that it can be done; chasing it out of one fact by assuming it in another, will never do it. But if philosophers will not unite, and will fight, if the battle must go on; yet might it not be as becoming to philosophers, as it confessedly is to preachers, just to take some little pains to ascertain what the opinion is they are attacking? Now it seems to us there is one mistake here, on the part of the experientialists, which has caused a sad waste of good arguments. They seem to suppose that when their opponents declare a belief to be innate, a mental sense to be intuitive, they mean to assert that it can come into conscious exercise without instruction, and even without experience. Why should Mr. Mill assume,* that to maintain self and non-self to be primary data of consciousness, is to assert that "the first sensation" the infant sentiency experiences, awakens in it the distinct consciousness of that notion? As well might we say that the infant, which certainly does act from the first hour of its birth on remembered sensations, does so because it has consciously come to the conclusion that memory is veracious.

* Page 214.

Why does Mr. Grote argue that belief in causation cannot be innate, because philosophers of old, as now, differed so widely, and were so utterly uncertain as to what the cause of all things is? The fact that, whilst they so utterly disagreed as to the cause, and whilst neither experience nor reason could show them any cause, they yet all agreed in believing a cause must be, and in being unable to rest without discovering it, would rather tend to show that belief to be a necessary one. And though to assert it is, seems to be going beyond what is as yet ascertained; to suppose that if it were, all men would know, without experience, what the cause is, is as much as to say, that to believe a man has been murdered, is to know who murdered him; a conclusion all experience contradicts. Or why do we so perpetually come on the argument, that conscience is not an intuitive faculty, that the sense of right and wrong is not innate, *because* mankind differ so widely as to which actions are right, which wrong, some thinking those acts to be most infamous which others deem most holy? The fact here affirmed, that all men *are* distinguishing between right and wrong, these arguers wholly overlook. We all believe there are, or may be, other qualities by which matter could be distinguished than those our senses can detect: do we ever find men trying to distinguish these? There are distinctions between actions and between things which experience alone can teach us, such for example as that some are

* Grote's *Plato*, vol. i.

useful, some are hurtful; but we do not find that all men are involuntarily led to draw this distinction, still less to believe all ought to act on the distinction they have drawn. Take any bodily sense, the sense of sight,—do we intuitively distinguish colour and form by that sense? Certainly not, we can distinguish nothing by it without the light. Even with the light, which is the same to all, we are very far from seeing things alike; we do not all distinguish colour in the same manner, nor do the same colours or the same forms please, or displease all. But suppose the light by which we see were not the same for all; that the greater part of mankind lived in dark underground caverns; others in twilight caves, or in Plato's cave of shadows; that some lived all their lives in vaults lighted by sulphurous flames; some in vaults of variously stained, or variously distorting glass; whilst only a few comparatively lived in the open air and pure sunlight; would not all these disagree as to colour and form? and would their disagreement prove that they all had, or that they had not, the same intuitive sense of sight? Certainly, if all these had like impressions, we should conclude their organ of sight was different. Just so if we imagine a world of men gifted with an intuitive sense of right and wrong; whether such men will judge alike as to what actions, tempers, and aims are right, and what are wrong, will wholly depend on whether they all have the same light. Imagine, further, that this mental light was originally given for all by God's revelation of His own nature,

but that it was transmitted to every succeeding generation through their parents—who of necessity can only transmit so much as they have themselves received—through society, through laws and customs, differing in circumstances, in modes of thought, and in habits in every conceivable measure. Suppose that some of these men had sunk into the state of the tree Indians, or the natives of some parts of Australia, whilst some were living in the purest light of the Christian Example; would not the wonder be, if in such a world there were as much agreement as to right and wrong, as we actually find in our own?

To suppose that an intuitive perception of right and wrong must furnish those who have it with an infallible knowledge of the real moral character of complex actions, in every conceivable circumstance, is to suppose it involves a supernatural, direct, and independent revelation to each individual man; which, if it did, there would be little agreement indeed. It is much the same as to maintain that men cannot have the sense of sight, because their own eyes do not furnish them with light; if they did—if each man furnished his own light as well as his own eyes—it would be highly unreasonable to expect any agreement whatever amongst them as to the true character of any visible phenomena.

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